

Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority Bill 2026

Submission No: 040
Submission By: [REDACTED]
Publication: Making the submission public but withholding your name

I have been associated with the Lake Cootharaba area and the Noosa River System for 45 years, and have owned a house on the Lake Cootharaba lake fore shore at Boreen Point for 30 years where I am now retired.

Many changes, good and bad have occurred over that time. I can remember sitting on my verandah and counting 15 trawlers on the lake scraping the bottom for shrimps, just to be sold for bait. The Lake has never recovered from such exploitation.

For many years prior to 2009, I and my neighbours enjoyed the Lake, using our boats to teach our children and grand children to water ski and sail. At that time water skiing was allowed on the Lake. Even so, apart from an occasional ski boat mainly owned by locals, there was little use of the lake for that purpose, or by power boats in general. It was just too far up the river from the lower Noosa area that, as today, it did not attract many sports boats, for skiing or otherwise. The main power boats in the Lake were the regular tourist boat going up to the Everglades, and bringing visitors to the now long defunct Boreen Point Jetty Restaurant.

For many years there was argument and discussion about how to regulate and manage the Noosa waterways. This was hardly ever about the upper areas of the river and lakes, as nothing ever happened there that people could object to, or that was damaging or degrading to the environment. The trawlers were recognized to have done a lot of damage, and there was concern about farming runoff from silt and agricultural chemicals, and talk of possible sewerage contamination from Boreen Point which was later shown to be negligible.

Noosa has had the benefit of a strong environmental movement, and some councils rightly or wrongly, have in my opinion, overly influenced law makers to enact legislation sympathetic to views that do not consider all of the consequences of these laws, or their failure to achieve reasonable or fair beneficial outcomes.

From the late 80s and into the 2000's numerous plans were put forward by the Noosa Council (Noosa River Plan 2004), and other groups to organise and control activities on the river. These mainly concentrated on the lower busiest sections of the river. There was the Noosa River Plan begun in 1997 and followed by various revisions and amendment over the next 10 years including the 'Noosa River Community Juries' of 2015 and 2016, and 'The Noosa River Plan 2017-2018'. All this 'consultation' continued into the current decade until an impasse was reached in October 2023 when a new Mayor and Councillors voted down the 'Noosa River River Management Plan', in favour of more consultation over contentions elements of the plan, (including creating a conservation park).

Over the past several decades the Noosa council has been dominated and/or heavily influenced by a strong environmental faction. Mayors such as [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], with support from the Noosa Parks Association, and leaders such as [REDACTED], have conducted campaigns aimed at influencing outcomes in the Noosa Shire, sometimes without regard for the other peoples interests or a balanced outcome. An example of that was the Noosa Councils lobbying to create a Marine Park in the Noosa River System. This occurred in 2009. A valuable outcome was the ability to better control river bank erosion, marine hazard reduction, pollution, noise etc. A bad outcome was to ban water skiing and towing anything behind a boat in Lake Cootharaba. Lake Cootharaba is 10kms long and 5 kms wide. It has always had 2 designated water ski areas out in the middle of the Lake. There is no noise pollution, no erosion, no marine hazards, no pollution or congestion from too many boats. In fact you couldn't find a more suitable area for families to enjoy the Lake with their families in this way. So an outcome perhaps suitable for the congested lower Noosa River area has become a bureaucratic tool to prevent something that does no harm, and prevents me (and anyone else), from taking my grandchildren and great grand children out to enjoy the Lake and nature in a way that is harmless and beneficial, (in this electronic age).

The reason the 2023 council did not vote for the River plan at that time, was that there was overwhelming community disquiet and objections to elements of the plan. I understood the concerns over the suggestion to establish a Conservation Park over the Noosa River and Lakes. I farmed in close proximity to Lake Broadwater near Dalby for 45 years, which became Queensland's only Marine Conservation Park. The problem with such an arrangement is that the State gives nearly total management and control of the park to the local council. The council can then do nearly whatever it likes with the park. This makes the park vulnerable to whoever can put the most pressure on the council. An untenable situation for the Noosa River and Lakes given the history of the Noosa council and NPA.

An example of the vitriol of the environment movement against the 2023 position by council was seen in many of the social media and web pages of the environment movement: [REDACTED]
Unfortunately I have found that this type of response is common from these groups.

A more recent example from the Noosa environmental lobby was their opposition to the Noosa North shore landing ground

continuing as it had been for 50 years. In the absence of any environmental studies or proof of harm by the uses, (hang glider pilots and small model aeroplane enthusiasts), the NPA issued the following communication to their members, and I quote:

'History has taught us that so long as there is a Landing Ground for Aircraft Reserve on Noosa North Shore, a future rogue Government can destroy the environmental values and amenity of Noosa North Shore'. and, 'We have learned the hard way that the only way to ensure effective environmental protection of the Noosa North Shore is to get the Noosa North Shore Landing Ground for Aircraft Reserve tenure extinguished, and for all of the former Reserve to be added to Cooloolool National Park'.

There was no consideration given to the many enthusiasts who had given immense amounts of money and time to establish and look after a tiny area of land to pursue their sports.

What is interesting is that a consultation process that was undertaken by the Queensland Government Department of Environment and Science regarding community views on the landing ground resulted in a 2 to 1 vote in favour of retaining the landing ground for these users.

Playing politics and circumventing the reasonable use and enjoyment of the Noosa River and Lakes should never be left in the hands of those with other agendas.

I support the Sunshine Coast Waterways Authority because I believe professional, coordinated independent management is the best path forward for our river.

I am in favour of a board that genuinely and impartially represents all users.